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# School families: The impact of participation in high school extracurricular activities

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## I. Introduction

The present study was designed to analyze the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and high school adolescents' **psychological sense of community** (PSOC). Extant research has linked PSOC to the several benefits (below). As such we believe that PSOC acts as a buffer between adolescents and negative high school outcomes.

### Psychological Sense of Community

The perception held by a member of a group that one belongs and matters. Further, PSOC captures that the group matters to each other and that through group commitment, shared needs will be met. Thus, PSOC encompasses four main concepts: membership, influence, fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection.

- Benefits of psychological sense of community:
- reduced stress
  - lower prevalence of anxiety, depression, and eating disorders
  - increased motivation in school
  - enhanced self-efficacy
  - reduced likelihood of gang involvement
  - increased efficacy to cope with major life transitions and events

Table 1- Average Group Scores

Group	PSOC		Enjoyment		Commitment	
	(M)	(SD)	(M)	(SD)	(M)	(SD)
Competitive	54.61	8.93	10.88	1.75	7.92	1.51
Performance	48.53	13.61	9.67	2.90	6.21	2.76
Participatory	53.74	11.59	11.21	1.50	6.95	2.12

## II. Methods

268 male and 425 female students (17 undisclosed) aged 15-18 were drawn from competitive, performance, and participatory groups (figure 1) that operated in two Utah high schools. These students were asked to respond to a standardized questionnaire assessing their sense of community (Sense of Community Index-2: SCI-2), enjoyment of their activity, and commitment to their activity.

**Competitive** – Example: school-sponsored clubs; The primary purpose of the activity is competition  
**Performance** – Example: performing arts groups; The primary purpose of the activity is performance  
**Participatory** – Examples: athletics and debate; The primary purpose of the activity is participation

## III. Results

A total of 710 questionnaires were distributed at two Utah high schools, and from these a total of 701 valid questionnaires were returned. 113 surveys were from participatory groups, 370 were from performance groups, and 218 were from competitive.

All groups scored high on the SCI-2, demonstrating that all of these extracurricular activities facilitate PSOC within their members. Performance groups on average scored the lowest on sense of community, commitment, and enjoyment of their activities. However, marching band and drill team, which are both performance and competitive groups, scored significantly higher (Table 1). The significant differences between these groups are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Significant Differences Between Groups



## IV. Conclusions

Performance groups were the only group to have minimums of 0 for both the commitment and enjoyment scales. This may be because of the compulsory nature of fine arts classes at the high school level. Many students in these classes take them because they provide required credits to graduate. In this manner, students don't have a large commitment to the group, and exhibit lower enjoyment scales.

Participatory groups are, by their nature, optional, as are for the most part, competitive groups. The high level of commitment that is required to participate in competitive groups would increase the commitment scores. Supporting this, as a general rule those performance groups, which are audition/selective about participants show higher scores on all scales.

Figure 1 – Competitive, Performance, and Participatory Groups



Football



Orchestra



National Honors Society

